

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2130

As Passed House:
February 14, 2014

Title: An act relating to the veterans innovations program.

Brief Description: Concerning the veterans innovations program.

Sponsors: Representatives MacEwen, Orwall, Morrell, Seaquist, Haler, Appleton, Ross, Stanford, Green, Van De Wege, Ormsby and Freeman; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 1/16/14, 1/23/14 [DP];
Appropriations Subcommittee on Health & Human Services: 2/6/14 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/14/14, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the Defender's Fund and the Competitive Grant Program from the Veterans Innovations Program (VIP).
- Requires the VIP to provide funding and support to eligible veterans and service members for crisis relief and education, training, and employment opportunities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; Sawyer, Vice Chair; Johnson, Ranking Minority Member; Holy, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson, Hope, Robinson, Santos and Young.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Morrell, Chair; Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Cody, Green, G. Hunt, Kagi, Ormsby, Ross, Schmick and Tharinger.

Staff: James Kettel (786-7123).

Background:

In 2006 the Legislature created the Veterans Innovations Program (VIP) within the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) to provide crisis and emergency relief and education, training, and employment assistance to veterans and their families. The DVA may receive gifts, grants, and endowments from public and private sources for the benefit of the VIP. The VIP has its own account from which expenditures may only be used for VIP purposes.

The VIP consists of two separate programs: the Defender's Fund; and the Competitive Grant Program. The Defender's Fund provides assistance to veterans returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, or post-9/11 homeland security missions who are experiencing financial hardships due to their time away from home. Veterans eligible under the Defender's Fund may receive a one-time grant of up to \$500.

The Competitive Grant Program funds proposals by veterans through a competitive selection process, based on three categories of need: crisis and emergency relief; education, training, and employment assistance; and community outreach and resources.

Summary of Bill:

The Defender's Fund and the Competitive Grant Program are eliminated within the VIP. Under the VIP, the DVA must provide funding and support to eligible veterans, National Guard members, and members of the Armed Forces reserves for crisis relief and education, training, and employment opportunities. The DVA must establish a process to make veterans and National Guard members and reservists aware of the VIP and to assist them in completing the VIP application.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs):

(In support) This bill simplifies the internal administration within the DVA and funds would still be available to increase awareness of the program to veterans and active military members. The bill allows for just one source of funding, makes staff administration more efficient, and eliminates the \$500 limit amount in the Defender's Fund.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations Subcommittee on Health & Human Services):

(In support) This is an excellent bill and the Veterans Conservation Corps strongly urge your support.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs): Alfie Alvarado, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs; and Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition

Persons Testifying (Appropriations Subcommittee on Health & Human Services): Ted Wicorek, Veterans Conservation Corps.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations Subcommittee on Health & Human Services): None.